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ABSTRACT

The regionalization of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) in special education provides an effective and cost-efficient means of delivering training to parents and professionals. Public Law 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, mandated that each state form a CSPD, primarily to prepare personnel to educate children with disabilities. California responded by forming a CSPD advisory committee as a mechanism for information, dissemination, comments, and funding of personnel development in special education. The state was divided into 12 regions, with each region forming a Regional Coordination Council (RCC). The 12 councils have membership from school personnel, community members, parents, institutions of higher education, and other educational advocates. Region H Coordinating Council is located in a rural, geographically and culturally diverse area, which creates additional challenges for developing parent and special education training. When establishing RCCs, states should consider political dynamics, geography, and cultural diversity of regions and the allocation and accountability of funds. In order for the council to be effective, an open interchange of parent and professional development is necessary. (KS)

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ED 369 631

REGIONALIZED PARENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT: THE RURAL CALIFORNIA MODEL (RRCM)

Introduction

Through the re authorization of Public Law 94-142 with Public Law 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1991, each state was delegated to form a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The CSPD's primary focus is for the preparation of personnel to educate children with disabilities.

California responded by forming a CSPD Advisory Committee, commonly called CSPDAC. By instituting CSPDAC, California established a mechanism for information, dissemination, comments, and funding of personnel development in Special Education. The state, using the ideas of regionalization, was divided into twelve regions as reflected in Figure 1. Each region formed a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC). Regionalization is defined as an established mechanism that incorporates a given number of special education districts or SELPA's (Special Education Local Plan Areas) for the purpose of providing coordinated inservice and parent education.

Regional Coordinating Council (RCC)

The twelve Regional Coordinating Councils have membership from school personnel, community members, parents, institutions of higher education (IHE's), and other educational advocates. Each RCC has one representative on the statewide CSPDAC, which has twelve additional members from parent groups, Institutions of Higher

RC 019601

FIGURE 1
CSPDAC REGIONS

Education, the Advisory Commission on Special Education, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the California Teacher's Association, and others. The purpose of the state CSPDAC is to advise the Special Education Division of the California State Department of Education on issues related to personnel development. The organization plan is represented in Figure 2.

In 1990 as part of the evolution of responsibilities of the RCC's, regionalization of California's Strategic planning in special education was implemented. Currently, each region including Region H, has developed their strategic goals for 1993-1994. These goals, combined with the other 11 Regional Coordinating Council goals, are synthesized into a unified California Strategic Plan for the 1990's. This follows the concepts of site-based management that is so popular in public regular education.

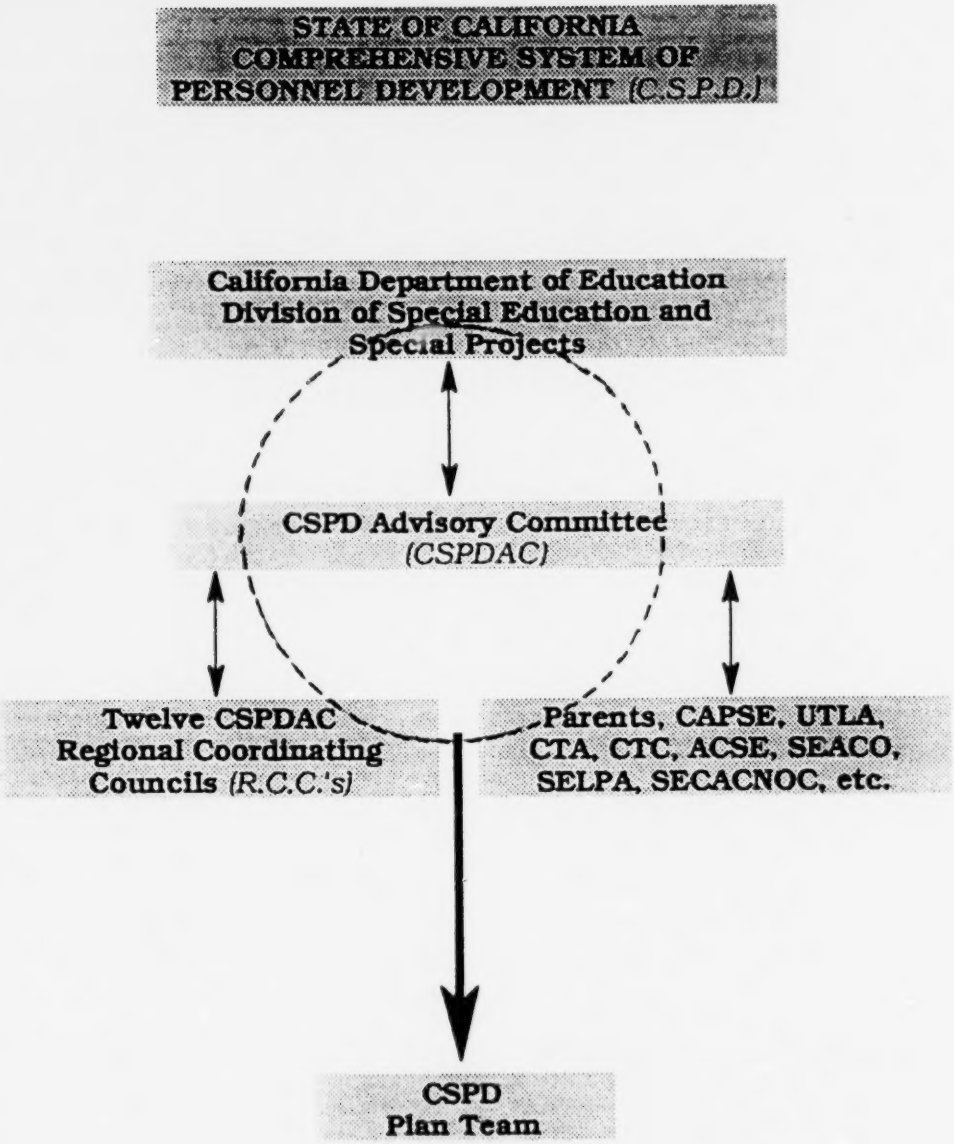
The Regional Coordinating Councils have proven a very effective and cost-efficient way of providing quality parent and special education inservice training. As a result of the strained and restricted funding in the state, the regionalization approach is very cost-effective. This collaboration has created a unified approach to serving parents and special education personnel through the same training opportunities.

Region H Regional Coordinating Council

Region H Coordinating Council is located in the center of the State of California. The area is a region that is geographically diverse and is rural in every sense of the word. The region encompasses the San Joaquin Valley and the Sierra Mountain communities.

The San Joaquin Valley is predominant agricultural with the ranching area of Kettleman Hills receiving population sparsity funds from the state. The student population in the valley consist of at least 50% of the special education students being of Hispanic origin

FIGURE 2


STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF
PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT (C.S.P.D.)
California Department of Education
Division of Special Education and
Special Projects
CSPD Advisory Committee
(CSPDAC)
Twelve CSPDAC
Regional Coordinating
Councils (R.C.C.'s)
Parents, CAPSE, UTLA,
CTA, CTC, ACSE, SEACO,
SELPA, SECACNOC, etc.
CSPD
Plan Team

with primary language of Spanish. There are other minority populations as well.

The mountain area to the East of the valley is predominantly national forest, which includes Yosemite National Forest. This area has all of the same dynamics of isolation that is often seen in areas of Alaska and Wyoming, such as transportation problems during the winter.

These geographic and cultural diversity issues create additional challenges for the Region H Coordinating Council when developing parent and special education training conferences and workshops.

Region H is composed of eight SELPA's with each Selpa having one SELPA representative and one CAC Representative, one IHE, and other identified agencies, such as Developmental Disabilities Service Area Boards. The eight SELPA's are: Fresno County, Fresno Unified, Clovis Unified, Madera/Maraposa County, Merced County, Stanislaus County, and TriCounty (Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne). Of the two regional IHE's, the only one who participates is California State University, Fresno. Among the private colleges, the Regional Coordinating Council often collaborates with Fresno Pacific College.

How to Establish and Regional Coordinating Council on a Shoestring

The political dynamics of establishing a coordinating council for personnel development in Special Education should be considered when exploring the possibility of establishing a more regionalized delivery system. This should include consideration of the goals and direction of the state department of education, goals and objectives of the state strategic plan, statewide commitments to a system change, and a commitment of all school districts to the regionalization concept.

When considering dividing the state into regions, geographic considerations should be given to physical geography, ethnography,

populations and cultural and ethnic diversity. These determinants are critical when developing an effective Regional Coordinating Council.

In the allocation and accountability of funds for a regionalized system, creativity plays the major role. The budget process is necessary for the systematic application of funds. This systematic application may be based on Pupil Count, Base Grant or a combination of the two. The Regional Coordinating Council applies for funds through the state-wide CSPD, which can be either through a competitive process or the more effective process of dividing the funds equably through all regions of the state.

The accountability for the allocated and expended funds for personnel development is through the customary End of the Year Academic Report. This report reflects SELPA matching funds and in-kind services. The statewide CSPD committee then accepts the report and integrates it into the state annual report.

Each Regional Coordinating Council operates autonomously within the legal limit of state and federal governing codes. All of the Councils should operate in the same manner throughout the state. Specific meetings are regularly scheduled throughout the year and these can be either in the same geographic location or rotated throughout the region.

Parent and Special Education Collaboration Pragmatics

Parent involvement within the Regional Coordinating Council is on an equal status of the professional representing the SELPA, IHE, and other agencies. Including the parent on this level, will create a regional council that is destined to achieve success. In all likelihood, not having the parent on this level will set the tone for a council that is dictated by special education professionals. Ultimately, the council

will loose sight of their primary mission of serving children with disabilities.

In order for the Council to be effective, an open interchange of parent and professional development is necessary. This interchange creates equal development of parent and professional inservice education and training's. These training's can be held throughout various school sites within the region.

To aid in the development of the inservice education and training sessions, the Strategic Plan must be established and implemented before the training can begin. Strategic Plans include not only preservice and inservice strands but also includes the parent training strand. This parent training strand includes identified areas of parental need and interest.

Regional Coordinating Councils also network with other state advisory groups and boards. These may include advisory commissions, state school boards, both legislative houses of government, and any other state organizations that the council deems necessary for accomplishment of its goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the regionalization of Comprehensive Personnel Development in Special Education provide an effective and cost-efficient mean of delivering training for parents and professionals. The Regional Coordinating Council provides the forum for facilitating open dialogue between parents and professional. This forum also provides insight for the IHE's in contemporary issues and challenges that face each school district within their region. With parent, school district and IHE collaboration and coordination, the regionalization of staff development can be a reality.